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SUBJECT: DOS SANTOS SET TO CALL ELECTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 5

REF: 07 LUANDA 01275

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: It appears President Dos Santos will officially call on June 4 for legislative elections to be held on Friday, September 5. In his address to open the June 3 Council of the Republic meeting, Dos Santos reported that the National Election Commission (CNE) had assured him conditions for elections would be ready to meet the September timeframe. The Council of the Republic unanimously concurred with the assessment and urged the President to convoke elections on only one day, versus the President's two-day proposal announced at the beginning of the year. According to a political party member of the closed door Council of the Republic, the President agreed to call elections for September 5th, with the possibility of a limited extension in the case of logistical complications in remote locations. If the President calls elections tomorrow, Angola will take an important step toward building a lasting democratic tradition. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In a widely publicized meeting on June 3, CNE President Caetano de Sousa told President Dos Santos that conditions for elections in Angola would be ready before September 5, meeting the timeline established by Dos Santos in December 2007 (reftel). After the meeting, Caetano de Sousa told the press he had recommended to the President that elections be held on only one day, as called for by electoral law. Caetano added that many lingering questions, including which parties will be eligible to run and who the candidates will be, can only be determined after the President convokes elections.

¶3. (SBU) Later on June 3, the President presided over a closed-door session of the Council of the Republic, a presidential advisory body comprised of key government leaders, political party leaders from parties with representation in parliament, and religious and civil society members, for consultations concerning Angola's preparedness for "free, just and credible" elections. In a statement made public after the meeting, the Council declared it had unanimously agreed that conditions were set for the President to call for elections under his proposed September timeline.

¶4. (SBU) After the meeting, Luis Dos Passos, President of the Democratic Renewal Party and member of the Council of the Republic, told the Embassy the Council recommended to the President that he call elections for Friday September 5th. Dos Passos added that the Council was concerned that some voters in rural areas might be disenfranchised by last minute logistical glitches or inclement weather; as a result, the Council recommended that the National Assembly consider amending the electoral law to allow voting at these trouble spots within 8 days of the election date, should such disruptions occur.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: We expect President Dos Santos will officially convoke Angola's long-awaited legislative elections on June 4, meeting the 90-day constitutional requirement for elections on September 5. In spite of lingering concerns on the part of political parties, civil

society, and even CNE insiders, that the CNE can pull off
successful elections in early September, it appears that the
President's determination will keep the process on track. END
COMMENT
FERNANDEZ